

BOWSER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW.

She is ill, and He Goes to Chirk Her Up.

Mrs. Bowser was in tears. The cook was in tears. The cat was in tears. When Mr. Bowser reached home and saw the fearful state of affairs, he was about to make a great roar, but Mrs. Bowser handed him a telegram. It was from her mother, and read that the old lady was very ill. "By heck!" said Mr. Bowser. "Ain't it awful!" sobbed Mrs. Bowser.

"It surely is," he replied, and magnanimously added: "She's my mother-in-law, of course, and she never visits us except to make things uncomfortable for me, but I'll forgive her. I'll not only forgive her, but as you are not feeling well I'll run up to Concord and see just how she is and chirk her up all I can."

"You—you don't mean it!" gasped Mrs. Bowser in the greatest astonishment. "Why, of course I do! Just throw a few things in the satchel for me and I'll take the night train up. I haven't been out of town for a year, and I shall rather enjoy a short trip."

"But I'm afraid you can't sleep on the sleeping car."

"I'll sleep like a top. It's all settled that I go."

Two hours later Mr. Bowser was a passenger aboard the night train enjoying the feeling that a good action always brings happiness. Every berth in his sleeper was taken, and there were several children aboard. He made friends with two or three from the start, and before the train had gone fifty miles he was gratified on hearing one mother say to another:

"Now there's a man who makes his home and his whole neighborhood happy. I don't believe that anything ever puts him out, or that he has a cross word for anybody."

Mr. Bowser was in the habit of tumbling into bed, rolling on his back and falling asleep within five minutes. As soon as he strikes the bed the family cat, rats, and mice walk about on tiptoe, and the grocery wagons, butchers' carts and fire engines never pass his house if it can be avoided. The small boy who would dare utter one "coo-ee" in front of his house after 10 o'clock at night would realize that he was taking his life in his hands. He got into his berth in the sleeper expecting the usual results to follow, but somewhat to his surprise they didn't.

As is usually the case, two or three men were yet ready to turn in, and they began discussing politics. Every word was audible from end to end of the car. For about ten minutes Mr. Bowser wondered over their impudence. For five more he was amazed at their disregard for the rights of others. Then he jumped to the conclusion that it was a personal matter, and he called the porter and said:

"This is the sleeping car. I have come to bed to sleep. Those men must shut up or get out!"

"Yes, sah," replied the porter, and he went off about his business instead of delivering the message. He had been on a sleeping car long enough to know that twenty-three people had no rights in case the twenty-fourth didn't feel sleepy. The discussion continued for ten minutes. Mr. Bowser poked his head between the curtains of his berth and exclaimed:

"Are you fellows going to keep that chatter up all night? How does it happen that you didn't take the hog train?"

There was an exchange of courtesies. The language was vigorous. Mr. Bowser was derided and defied, but his dander was up, and he called the porter and conductor and insisted to strenuously on his rights that the political discussion came to an end. As a wind-up, however, Mr. Bowser was called a crank, a kicker, and a cheese-head, and was advised to go off in a lonely spot by himself. There had been seven or eight minutes of comparative quiet and his eyes were closing in sleep when a man in the opposite berth began to snore, and pretty soon the snore was ornamented with a gurgle.

"By the great horn spoon, but that's got to stop!" exclaimed Mr. Bowser as he sat up and poked his head out. "Here—you over there—stop that infernal bas-o-o of yours! Porter, come here and rouse up that critter across the way!"

The "critter" was roused. He got in two more snores and three long-drawn groans before the dig in the ribs broke in on his slumbers. Then he indignantly demanded to know who had dared to disturb him.

"You were snoring," explained Mr. Bowser. "Well, what of it? Is it any business of yours?"

"You bet it is! If you want to make a hog of yourself get off and take the stock train!"

The jaw lasted ten minutes, and as two-thirds of the passengers sided with Mr. Bowser, and as the snore diminished to sighs and gasps he felt that

the victory was his. This time quietness brought sleep, but sleep lasted but a few minutes. The wail of a child brought Mr. Bowser's eyes open; and a second wail sat him up, and a third caused him to exclaim:

"Have I got to murder some one on this car before I can get an hour's sleep? Where's the mother of that young 'un that she don't stop his noise!"

"My little boy seems to be ill!" replied the female voice.

"Seems to be ill? Don't you know whether he is or not? If he is sick get up and attend to him. If he's only dreaming give him a cuff and wake him up. By Jackson, but why the law allows a woman to gad about the country with a child I can't understand!"

"And I thought he was such a nice, good-natured old man!" murmured the woman as she petted the child to sleep again.

This time there was no sleep for Mr. Bowser. He had got so mad that his eyes wouldn't close, and he tumbled around and wished he was home so that he could say something to Mrs. Bowser to make her feel bad. He was ready for another fracas when the train drew up at a station. He heard people talking, baggage trucks rumbling and a man passing along and striking wheels with a hammer. At last he called to the porter, and when the man had arrived he was accosted with:

"What in the name of the ten tribes has happened now? What are all those people gabbling about?"

"It's the people at the depot, sah," was the reply.

"Yes, but are the people at the de-

pot allowed to whoop and chatter and scream and wake up every sleeper in the cars? Fine managed road this. What's that rumbling and banging and flashing?"

"Loadin' up the baggage."

"Oh, is it? In order to load up a few old trunks they must hustle and bang and stand everybody's hair up. I'd like to talk to the manager of this road for five minutes! And what's that dunderhead 'ounding on the wheel for?"

"Testin' 'em, sah."

"Well, I'd like to test him! By smoke, but the people of the United States are the biggest lot of fools on earth to put up with such impositions. I'll sue somebody tomorrow for \$50,000 damages."

There was yet another cause to kick. The train hadn't left the station ten miles when there was a bump on the floor of the car, followed by a yell. One of the children had fallen out of bed.

In the name of mercy what's that? almost howled Mr. Bowser as the curtains parted again.

"Look here, old man," answered a masculine voice, "you seem worried. Why don't you shut up and go to sleep?"

"Because I've got to murder seven or eight people before I'll be allowed to go to sleep, and don't you tell me to shut up!"

The man put his head out and gazed at Mr. Bowser. Then he advised him to eat a bean mash, soak his head and hang onto his chin. Mr. Bowser replied in kind, and added a threat to lick his fellow passenger if he had to pursue him around the globe to find the occasion. The whole car was in a row before the conductor could be brought in as a peacemaker, and Mr. Bowser was one of the half dozen who dressed and sat up for the next three hours and glared around him and muttered under his breath. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon he entered his own house and flung his satchel on the floor.

"How did you get home so soon?" asked Mrs. Bowser in alarm. "And is mother better or worse?"

"I didn't get to Concord," he replied.

"You didn't? Then is she dead?"

"You bet it is! If you want to make a hog of yourself get off and take the stock train!"

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